

All Glories to Sri Guru and Gauranga

The Guardian of Devotion

A Chronicle of a Transcendental Relationship

His Divine Grace
Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Maharaj
Founder-Acharya of Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math

Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Maharaj and
Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad

Forward

Sri Chaitanya-caritamṛta, the post-graduate study for Gaudiya Vaisnavas begins with the invocation *vande gurun*, “I offer my respectful obeisances unto the spiritual master.” Therein, Srila Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswami reveals that the fully blossoming spiritual conception comes to embrace a plurality of *gurus*.

The scriptures in general present a very broad and universal conception of Sri Guru, laying stress on the spiritual substance—that divine current of nectar that flows down to this plane from the highest domain through the inspiration that is found in the heart of a real Vaisnava. To deny divine revelation through another agent in the name of being chaste to one’s guru can be offensive and even suicidal.

As *guru* is the functioning principle of Divinity revealing Himself in this world, according to our different stages of realizations, he may appear in different forms. The chastity of a disciple is demonstrated in recognizing the divine presence of Sri Guru wherever it is found, and bowing his head at the lotus feet of the agent through whom Divinity is so kindly revealing Himself.

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The true chastity of the Vraja *gopis* was shown in their answering the flute-call of Sri Kṛṣṇa in the dead of night, although apparently abandoning their husbands to do so (*ya nisa sarva-bhutanam tasyam jagarti samyami*). So while some are sleeping in the bodily conception of Sri Guru, others are awakening to the inner

dimension of his divine personality. His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Raksaka Sridhara Deva Goswami Maharaja writes in *Sri Guru and His Grace*, “We must not identify our *guru* with the appearance we perceive with our physical senses. Our inner identification of him will be clarified according to the growth of our vision. When our vision increases and takes shape from material to transcendental, his look will also change accordingly.

Otherwise, what we see will be based on a material conception. And to force the material conception onto Divinity is a crime, it is ignorance, it is erroneous. We have to free ourselves from the snare of identifying reality with the physical form presented to our senses. By eliminating the external conception, we have to enter into the internal, and that will be all-important to a progressive disciple, if we want to go to the inner world of substance.”

In proportion to the depth and intensity of our inner hankering for a connection with Divinity, our conception of guru will expand. In separation from Sri Krsna, the *gopis* began approaching even the trees and enquiring, “Where is Krsna?” Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura writes, “The reflected form of the lotus feet of Sri Guru in different receptacles constantly reveals many new matters for our instruction.” For those whose divine eye is awakened, they will find traces of Divinity everywhere and in everything.

It is our hope that the readers of this small booklet will approach the contents with an attitude of humble submission and an open heart.

And we pray that their attachment to the lotus feet of Sri Guru may be increased.

Bhakti Sudhira Goswami



Editor's Note: His Divine Grace Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj is affectionately addressed by his disciples as "Srila Prabhupad," and His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Maharaj is known to his disciples as "Srila Guru Maharaj." However, since they both refer to their spiritual master, Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Prabhupad, as "Guru Maharaj" and "Prabhupad"

throughout the text, in order to avoid ambiguity we have referred to them by their sannyas names.

Siksa Guru

“Our relationship is very intimate...”

Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj and Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Dev-Goswami Maharaj first met sometime in the year 1930 in Allahabad, India. In a taped conversation recorded in a 1973 meeting at Srila Sridhar Maharaj's Math at Nabadwip Dham, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj recalls: "So, we are very fortunate to hear His Divine Grace, Om Vishnupad Paramahansa Parivrajakacarya Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Maharaj. By age and by experience, in both ways, he is senior to me. I was fortunate to have his association since a very long time, perhaps in 1930, something like that. At that time, he did not accept *sannyas*; he just left home, and as a *vanaprastha*, in his white dress, he went to Allahabad.

"Maharaj [To Srila Sridhar Maharaj] I think you remember the incident when you went to Allahabad? On that auspicious occasion, we were connected. There is a long story, it will take time, but I had the opportunity of associating with Sridhar Maharaj for several years.

Krishna and Prabhupad liked him to prepare me."

" Sridhar Maharaj lived in my house for many years, so naturally, we had very intimate talks and he was my good advisor. I took his advices, instructions, very seriously because from the very beginning I know that he is a pure Vaishnava, a pure devotee, and I wanted to associate with him and tried to help him also. Our relationship is very intimate."

Herein, we find the history of a transcendental relationship between these two pure devotees of the Lord. Addressing Srila Sridhar Maharaj as "His Divine

Grace" and Om Vishnupad -- forms of address for one regarded as a spiritual master -- Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj has transcended the norms of social etiquette and superficial formality. Intimately associating together for a concentrated period of over five years, often for five to seven hours daily, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj considered that "Krishna and Prabhupad liked him to prepare me" for his future expansive missionary activities in the Western world. While remembering their intimate talks, specifically in regard to *Bhagavad-gita*, Srila Sridhar Maharaj recalls the depth in penetration of their discussions. "Once while discussing the verse *dadami buddhiyam tam yena mam upayanti te* ["I give them the understanding by which they can come to Me" Bhagavad Gita 10.10] I submitted to him that here, *upayanti* is indicative of *parakiya rasa* [paramour relationship] On this point he agreed with me, saying, 'Yes, at this point there cannot be anything but the *parakiya rasa* of Vraja. The conclusion of *Bhagavad-gita* must come to this."

Recognizing Srila Sridhar Maharaj as "a pure Vaishnava, a pure devotee" since the beginning of their relationship, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj most highly valued his instructions and advice. He would often consult with him regarding the spiritual significance of his failing business and family relationships.

An example of how Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj tried to help Srila Sridhar Maharaj in his preaching work is seen in his appreciating Srila Sridhar Maharaj's uncanny ability for extracting the essence of the scriptures. He helped to finance the publication of Srila Sridhar Maharaj's original Sanskrit-Bengali work entitled *Prapanna-jivanamrta: The Nectar of Surrender*. The book, as well as containing original Sanskrit verses composed by Srila Sridhar Maharaj, is a compilation of verses from various Vaishnava scriptures such as *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and includes excerpts from the works of Rupa Goswami. It is divided according to the six divisions of surrender.

Constantly associating, whether in Allahabad, Calcutta, or other parts of India, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj and Srila Sridhar Maharaj's relationship continually developed. Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj continues to recall their meeting:

"In my householder life I had opened an office in Bombay for our business. The Bombay Gaudiya Math was established by Sridhar Maharaj and myself. We made two parties for begging, collecting alms. Sridhar Maharaj, myself, and

Bhakti Saranga Goswami Maharaj. So, I took them to my chemist friends and I collected about five hundred rupees. Sridhar Maharaj would speak, I would introduce, and Goswami Maharaj would canvass."

In the *Srila Prabhupad-lilamrta*, Satsvarup Das Goswami writes:

"Abhay would often accompany Sridhar Maharaj and his assistants at preaching programs, where he would play the *mrdanga*. And when Sridhar Maharaj fell ill, Abhay led the other devotees on preaching engagements, performing *kirtan*, playing *mrdanga*, and giving lectures on the *Bhagavatam*."

While still in Bombay, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj and Sridhar Maharaj were the receiving party for a Gaudiya Math *sannyas* upon his return from Europe. Although dismayed by his changed appearance which was missing the *tridanda* of a Gaudiya *sannyasi*, the *sikha* of a Vaishnava, as well as the traditional robes, they still eagerly inquired in regard to the preaching field in the West. The *sannyasi* remarked, "They ask questions that cannot be answered."

Concerned, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj inquired further as to the nature of those questions. One after another Srila Sridhar Maharaj answered them all. At last, the *sannyasi* was left dumbfounded and Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami boldly declared, "Today, Europe has been defeated by Asia!"

During the lifetime of Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Prabhupad, Srila Sridhar Maharaj once composed a poem describing the ontological positions of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur and the line of disciplic succession stemming from Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Prabhupad was so pleased with the poem's ontological depth and its happy style that he remarked: "Bhaktivinoda Thakur has written this through him. Now I am satisfied that although I may go, at least one man remains behind who can represent my conclusions." In further appreciation of Srila Sridhar Maharaj's writings, Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Prabhupad informed the editors of the Gaudiya Math's periodicals, "If you include articles written by Sridhar Maharaj, the quality of your publications will be greatly improved."

After the disappearance of Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Prabhupad, the Gaudiya Math gradually diverged. With full knowledge of the events surrounding the disintegration of the Gaudiya Math, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami told his disciples in the same 1973 conversation, "Our relationship is very

intimate. After the breakdown of the Gaudiya Math, I wanted to organize another organization, making Sridhar Maharaj the head."

Reciprocating the appreciation, Srila Sridhar Maharaj advised the leaders of the Gaudiya Sangha to confer the title "Bhaktivedanta" upon the then Abhay Charan. Later, his *sannyas-guru*, Sripad Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Maharaj, one of the senior-most disciples of Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur, and the first sannyas-disciple of Srila Sridhar Maharaj, gave *sannyas* to Abhay Charan, retaining the title "Bhaktivedanta," and conferring the *sannyas* name "Swami."

Additionally, when Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj returned to India in October of 1967, after his successful preaching initiative in America, he stayed with Srila Sridhar Maharaj in Nabadwip, and observed his Vyasa Puja celebration. At that time, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj wrote a letter to a disciple saying, "Yesterday, we have all come to Nabadwip Dham. This place is an establishment of one of my Godbrothers. It is a very nice and extensive place, and my Godbrother B.R. Sridhar Maharaj has spared one entire house for our stay. He has also agreed to cooperate with our society. We shall observe his birthday celebration, and the *brahmacaris* shall learn how to celebrate the spiritual master's birthday." Shortly afterwards, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj asked Srila Sridhar Maharaj to be the president of his newly formed society – the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

During the Vyasa Puja celebration, one of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj's disciples saw Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj and Srila Sridhar Maharaj fully absorbed in a deep discussion in Bengali. The disciple inquired from Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj what was the nature of their talk, and he replied, "If I were to tell you, you would faint. Sridhar Maharaj has very high realizations."

That Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj continually regarded Sridhar Maharaj as his advisor throughout his life is clear in the following letter written by him to one of Srila Sridhar Maharaj's disciples, Sripad Govinda Maharaj. Concerned about his failing health, he had written Sridhar Maharaj asking whether he should continue living in the United States or return to India to live his last days in Vrindavan.

After receiving Srila Sridhar Maharaj's reply, he wrote: "What Sripad Sridhar Maharaj has directed, I take it on my head. He is my always well-wisher. After

the departure of Prabhupad it is appropriate that I should accept his direction. I got direction from him that I shall live in this country forever."

Sometimes it is said that one's preaching contribution can be judged according to the number of temples established, devotees converted, and books published and distributed. Srila Sridhar Maharaj travelled and preached extensively all over India, personally accompanying Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur for many years. Nearly fifty years ago, he established the Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math on the banks of the Ganges in Nabadwip Dham, which is now a thriving institution.

His followers have established temples in major cities throughout the world. His Sanskrit and Bengali writings have been appreciated by both scholars and devotees for their originality, depth of realization, and happy poetic style. Published and widely distributed throughout the world, they are now available in English , Spanish, Hindi, Portuguese, German, French, and are being translated into other languages.

Throughout his life, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj always maintained the highest respect and confidence in Srila Sridhar Maharaj. He considered that whenever it was not possible for his disciples to proceed directly under his guidance, that they should take direction from Srila Sridhar Maharaj. He once wrote in a letter to one of his students: "Because you are my disciple, and I think, a sincere soul, it is my duty to refer you to someone who is competent to act as a *siksha-guru*. For spiritual advancement of life, we must go to someone who is actually practicing spiritual life. So, if you are actually serious to take instructions from a *siksha-guru*, I can refer you to the one who is the most highly competent of all my godbrothers.

This is B.R. Sridhar Maharaj, whom I consider to be even my *siksha-guru*, so what to speak of the benefit that you can have by his association. So, if you are serious about the advancement of your spiritual life, I will advise you to go to Sridhar Maharaj. It will be very good for your spiritual benefit, and I will feel that you are safe. When I was in India with the others, we lived with Sridhar Maharaj. You can also make arrangements for your other Godbrothers to go there in the future. So, live peacefully with Sridhar Maharaj, and thereby you will be spiritually enlightened."

In this passage, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj describes Srila Sridhar Maharaj as "the most competent of all my Godbrothers," "someone competent to

act as *siksha-guru*," and in an astounding statement, he declares, "I consider Sridhar Maharaj to be my Siksha Guru, so what to speak of the benefit that you can have from his association"!

What Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj means by *siksha-guru* is best explained in his own words. In his purports to the *Adi-lila* of *Chaitanya caritamrta*, he states: "One should know the instructing spiritual master to be the Personality of Krishna. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami states that there are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. One is the liberated person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service and the other is he who invokes the disciple's spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions. There is no difference between the shelter-giving Supreme Lord and the initiating and instructing spiritual masters. If one foolishly discriminates between them, he commits an offense in the discharge of devotional service." (*Chaitanya-caritamrta – Adi-lila* 1.47) Although it may be said that Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj encouraged his godbrothers in general, no one anywhere can produce a similar statement of endorsement. The fact is that Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj possessed the highest respect and appreciation for Sridhar Maharaj, and Srila Sridhar Maharaj is unparalleled in his understanding and admiration of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj, as evinced in the following eulogy:

"So our Swami Maharaj has done a miracle! Thakur Bhaktivinoda conceived and Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur began to translate this conception into action. And we find that through Swami Maharaj, in his last days, it has been fulfilled to such a great extent. We are happy, we are glad, we are proud!"

In response to this, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj with great humility, his voice choked with emotion, tearfully replied, "So, by *guru* and Vaishnava, whatever position I have got it is by *guru's* mercy and the blessings of the Vaishnavas. Otherwise, how I may have? So, I wish that Sridhar Maharaj may bestow his blessings as he was doing always, and may *guru maharaj* help me so I can do some service. By his grace it has become successful. I have no credit. I do not know how things are happening, because I am not at all qualified: *chadiya vaisnava seva, nistara payeche keba*. [Without serving an ideal Vaishnava, who can be delivered from the clutches of *maya*?]"

And after the disappearance of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj, Srila Sridhar Maharaj declared: "I consider him to be *saktyavesa avatara*, and it is confirmed in his writings on his spiritual journey through the Atlantic. How he

landed there in America, and the nature of his beginning the movement, his intense degree of dedication to Krishna and dependence, and how much he made himself empty of any other desire than the order of his *gurudev* - quite empty that Krishna came down to help him, and it is corroborated that Krishna worked on his behalf. In his poem, *Prayer to the Lotus Feet of Krishna*, we find him pleading with Krishna, "My dear Brother, Your good fortune will come to You only when Srimati Radharani be comes pleased with You." Seeing his *gurudeva* Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati as Radharani's delegation and his order as Her divine service, he humbly submitted that he did not feel himself worthy or fit to discharge the divine service, so he enlisted Krishna in the service of his *guru*. He had completely dedicated himself to the purpose, he was so earnest in his prayer to Krishna that he may discharge the duty that he has been given by his *guru maharaj*, that divine force, power, came down to help him. Otherwise, it is impossible. It is not a thing of the ordinary level that anyone will do, but the highest thing has been taken down to the lowest position so extensively. It cannot but be the divine power, embodied and in a great intensity and magnitude! So, *saktyavesa-avatara*, I cannot but take him to be so."

With such appreciation, there should be little doubt why Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj had implicit faith in Srila Sridhar Maharaj. He had even heard directly from Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Prabhupad of the exceptional qualifications of Srila Sridhar Maharaj. In their last known recorded meeting in 1977, just prior to Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami's leaving this mortal world, we find him imploring Srila Sridhar Maharaj to take up residence at his temple in Sridham Mayapur.

The conversation that ensues is a transcript of their taped conversation of March 1977.

Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami : I do not know for how long I will be able to carry on. So, I came to see Sridhar Maharaj.

Devotee: If you all go away, then the world will become dark.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: [to Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami] It is so wonderful that the will of the Lord becomes manifest through someone.

Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami: I want very much, Maharaj, that you come and stay at Mayapur. Because Prabhupad always desired that you preach. He told me

quite a few times, "Why don't you pull him out?" [They both laugh.] You know, I also tried to some extent before, but somehow or other it did not work out. Now, why don't you come and stay at Mayapur? Srila Prabhupad told me also, "Sridhar Maharaj is one of the finest preachers." I want to take you everywhere. At least at the place we have in Mayapur, people are coming from all over the world. Why don't you come and stay there? If you just agree, then whatever kind of building you want, I will arrange it for you. They are trying to build a house for me. So both of us will stay there. And whenever you want, you can come here to your Math.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Yes, as long as I am alive to fulfill Prabhupad's desire.

Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami: This is my earnest desire. Since you could not go around the world and preach, at least stay there and people will come to you. I shall make that arrangement. If you stay, then it will be helpful to me also. Sometimes I need to consult with someone but there is no one. There is no one that I can consult. I feel this deficiency very greatly.

Devotee: If he stays in Mayapur, then, all kinds of people will get to hear from him.

Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami: Yes, that's right.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Yes, people from all kinds of cultural backgrounds will come there.

Bhaktivedanta Swami : Yes, and they are already coming. And in that house I will make arrangements for an elevator so that you won't have to go through the difficulty of walking up and down the stairs. You won't even have to move a step yourself. I'll make arrangements for a car and a lift. My disciples are telling me that they will build a house for me. So, both of us will stay in that house. Most of the time I am travelling around, so if you are there, then they can get some guidance. So, Maharaj, *please*, give me the order and I will make all the arrangements for you. That Planetarium [The "Temple of Understanding"] also will be built under your direction. My idea is to combine the Indian culture and the American money – the lame man and the blind man policy. I tell them also that this will be very beneficial for the world.

Here, in their final meeting, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj prophetically refers to his imminent disappearance and reveals that it is in this connection that

he has come to see Sridhar Maharaj. In friendly jesting, they discuss Srila Sridhar Maharaj's reticence regarding large-scale preaching work. Of himself, Srila Sridhar Maharaj has remarked, "I did not want to become a big person. That is not my nature. I did not want to move around with many people. I am just satisfied with whatever I have. My spiritual thinking is my life.

The conclusions of the scriptures, the advices of the *mahajanas*, to relish them and practice them and to discuss them in a small confidential circle, that is the main goal of my life." In the Ninth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj, quoting Dhruva Maharaj, writes: "'My dear Lord, I am fully satisfied with whatever you have given me. I have nothing else to ask from You, for I am fully satisfied to be engaged in Your service.' This is the mentality of a pure devotee who does not want anything material or spiritual from the Personality of Godhead. Our Krishna Consciousness Movement is therefore called *krsna- bhavanamrta-sangha*, the association of persons who are simply interested in thoughts of Krishna."

Bhaktivedanta Swami testifies to his having personally heard Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Prabhupad mark the high qualifications of Srila Sridhar Maharaj, whom he had once requested to go to the West. In this regard, Srila Sridhar Maharaj once remarked, "My *guru maharaj* wanted me to go to the West for preaching, but I don't consider myself a fit person to preach in the West. Because, you see, I can't follow your intonation. So, [laughing] I must listen clearly, then I shall tell.

So, in this way, I told that *if you order, I must go*, but I don't think that I am fit to preach in the West. Anyhow, it was stopped, and Goswami Maharaj was sent to the West." When Srila Sridhar Maharaj had been selected, one of his godbrothers came to him and revealed the reason why Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Prabhupad had chosen him to preach in the West. This godbrother explained, "Do you know why Prabhupad wanted you to be sent to the West? He said, 'Because he can't be converted.'"

And just twenty-four hours before his departure from this mortal world, Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Prabhupad called for his beloved disciple Srila Sridhar Maharaj, and asked him to sing the song of Narottama Das Thakur: *Sri-rupa-manjari-pada* [the lotus feet of Rupa Manjari are my treasure]. Srila Sridhar Maharaj recalls: "So I did, hesitatingly. My nature is always hesitating, pushing back. Then, Kunja Babu asked me to stop. I was not a good singer, so as soon as

he suggested, I stopped. Then, Kunja Babu asked Puri Maharaj of Kalna, 'You sing.' So he began. Then, Srila Prabhupad was a little disturbed. 'I don't like to hear the sweet tune of the song,' he said.

Then, he stopped, and I had to begin again with *sri rupa manjari pada, sei mora sampada*. He wanted me to sing that song. That is the fulfillment of life of everyone of us, to be *rupanuga* - followers of Sri Rupa."

Senior godbrothers who witnessed this exchange have described it as a "mystic transmission" in which Srila Sridhar Maharaj was given admittance into the eternal entourage of Sri Rupa Manjari. Srila Sridhar Maharaj's humble vision, however, is that he was posted as the gatekeeper, the guardian of devotion (*bhakti-rakshak*), to protect the storehouse of conclusive truths about the full-fledged theistic conception of Sri Krishna, as given by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Further expressing his appreciation for Srila Sridhar Maharaj's "high realizations" in Krishna consciousness, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj says: "I want to take you everywhere. At least at the place we have in Mayapur, people are coming from all over the world. Why don't you stay there?" Sometimes it is wondered why Srila Sridhar Maharaj apparently did not take up Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami's offer.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj explains: "I said, 'Of course I shall try to help you. Sometimes I shall go and stay there with you.' But I really did not think at the time that I shall survive him."

Finally, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj refers to "that planetarium." Srila Sridhar Maharaj is very fond of Sanatan Goswami's most famous work, the *Brhad-bhagavatamrtam*, in which devotees, devotional service, and Krishna are described very scientifically. On the basis of this transcendental literature, Srila Sridhar Maharaj had contemplated an elaborate preaching exhibition, showing graphically, with the use of dioramas depicting the varieties of material and spiritual planetary systems, how the ultimate spiritual destination is Krishna's own abode, Goloka Vrindavan. Due to insufficient funds, Srila Sridhar Maharaj humbly submitted his idea to Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj, who approved, saying, "It will be built under your direction."

And just prior to his departure from this mortal world, Srila Bhaktivedanta

Swami Maharaj advised his senior disciples that in his absence, when the necessity arose to consult higher authority, that they should consult Srila Sridhar Maharaj. In conclusion, we humbly submit that the transcendental relationship between Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj and Srila Sridhar Maharaj be viewed and respected in terms of their eternal spiritual positions, and long-standing appreciation and affection for one another.

Since the departure of His Divine Grace A.C. Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad, the "Guardian of Devotion," His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Dev Goswami Maharaj, has repeatedly protected the teachings of the disciplic succession from perversion and misrepresentation as he has done for more than half a century, and has come to be recognized as a *jagad-guru*, or world-acharya.

Prabhupada Pranama

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur

Although outwardly he was like a lion, inwardly he was very very sweet, yet it could be traced only in his internal sweetness. Outwardly, the way of love was worshipped by him with grandeur, and awe and reverence, but his object was the simple and beautiful, divine love of Vrindavana, and his temperament in establishing that in the world was just like a lion's. After his departure I described his life in one *sloka*.

If he were living today, I think he would say, that Srila Sridhar Maharaj has imprisoned me in a cage of poetry.

nikhila-bhuvana-maya-chinnavichinna-karttri

vibudha-bahula-mrgya-mrgya-mukti-mohana-dhatti

sithilita-vidhi-raga-radhya-radhesa-dhani

vilasatu hrdis nityam bhaktisiddhanta-vani

With his first step, he vigorously cut asunder the whole plane of exploitation, and with his second, he has put a stop to all the calculation, liberated stages. With his third step, he has minimized the hardness and stiffness of the rules and regulations of calculative devotional service, by a touch of the divine love:

crossing Vaikuntha, he has given us the worship of Radha Govinda.

Calculation, the rules and regulations, awe, reverence, all these things are minimized, checked, slackened with the softness of Vrndavana within, and, and with the hardness of a devastator without, he created havoc in the materialistic world, fighting with one and all.

Singlehandedly fighting against the whole world, and cutting asunder everything – that was his external attitude. And his second attitude was to put a stop to all scholarly researchers and doctorates of different departments, and to stop their boasting research; and third, to minimize, to slack the grandeur of the worship of Narayana. He caused the domain of love to descend into this plane with the service of Radha-Govinda, establishing the flow of divine love from the heart as all in all. With that we come to serve our object of worship, and he represented the service of Radha-Govinda as the highest attainment.

That was his history. The real existence of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupad is in *bhaktisiddhanta-vani*, his divine teachings. May that *bhaktisiddhanta-vani* dance eternally within the core of your heart.

Brahma-gayatri

The meaning of the *brahma-gayatri-mantra* must bring us to the conclusion of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. The *gayatri-mantra* and the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* are one and the same. It is the very gist of the *Vedanta-sutra*. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is the elaborate commentary of *gayatri* (*artho'yam brahmasutranam, bharatartha-vinirnayah, gayatri-bhasya-rupau'sau, vedarthah parivrmhitah*). The meaning of the *gayatri-mantra* must be in the line of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. If we analyze how this is possible, we shall uncover the steps between the *gayatri-mantra* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

What is the meaning of *gayatri*? The word *gayatri* is a combination of two Sanskrit words: *ganat* (what is sung), *trayate* (gives deliverance).

This means, “a kind of song by which we can get our salvation, relief, emancipation.” Gayatri is known as Veda-mata, the mother of the *Vedas*. And Gayatri has produced the whole Veda. If we examine the Vedic conclusion from its most condensed aphorism to its most extensive expression, we shall find that it begins with *omkara*: the Vedic syllable Om. That truth is expressed as the

gayatri-mantra, then it appears in the form of the Vedas, and then as the *Vedanta-sutra*.

Finally, the Vedic conclusion is given its fullest expression in Vedic knowledge progresses in this line, the *gayatri-mantra* must contain within it the meaning of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, that is, that the Krsna conception of Godhead is the highest.

This must be the meaning of the *gayatri-mantra*, but the problem is how to extract *Srimad-Bhagavatam* – the Krsna conception – from within the womb of *gayatr* i. I heard that Jiva Goswami has given such an interpretation, but I could not find where it is written. I heard that he has given the meaning of *gayatri* leading to Krsna consciousness.

Anyhow, the tendency awakened in me to draw the meaning to the Krsna conception. The general meaning of *gayatri* is “that song which grants liberation.” Now, liberation must have some positive meaning.

Liberation means not freedom from the negative side, but positive attainment. This is the definition given in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*: *muktir hitvanyatha rupam svarupena vyavasthitih* – until and unless we attain the highest possible positive position, *mukti*, salvation, has not been effected. Mere withdrawal from the negative plane cannot be called liberation. Hegel has said that the object of our life is self-determination. We must determine our normal function in the organic whole – not mere emancipation from the negative side, but participation in a positive function in the domain of service. This is considered to be the highest attainment of life. This is the meaning of *gayatri*.

The word *gayatri* comes from two Sanskrit roots: *ganat*, and *trayate*.

Trayate means positive attainment to the final stage (*sva-rupena vyavasthitih*). And *ganat* means not mere sound, but musical sound.

That musical sound which grants us the highest positive deliverance indicates the *sankirtana* of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and the flute-song of Sri Krsna.

The purport of the *brahma-gayatri-mantra* is as follows. The first word is *Om*. *Om* is the seed *mantra* which contains everything within it. *Bhur* is where we are - *Bhu-loka* – the world of our experience.

Buvah is the world of mental acquisition. It is the support, the background of our experience. Our present position of experience is the effect of our mental acquisition. It is the support, the background of our experience. Our present position of experience is the effect of our mental acquisition. That we are here in the world of experience is no accident; we have acquired this position by our previous *karma*.

The physical sphere, this present world of experience, is only the product, the outcome of our previous mental impulses. And the subtle world of previous *karma*, the mental sphere, is known as Bhuvahloka.

The next word in the mantra is *svah*. Above Bhuvahloka is Svah-loka.

The mental world (Bhuvahloka) means acceptance and rejection: what to do and what not to do – “I like this, I don’t like that.” Svah-loka, however, is the plane of decision, the world of intelligence (Buddhiloka). Our intelligence tells us, “You may like this, but don’t do that, for then you will be the loser.” That plane, the plane of reason, is known as Svah-loka. In this way, this material world is composed of three general layers, *bhur*, the physical world, *bhuvah*, the mental world, and *svah*, the intellectual world.

Of course a more detailed analysis will reveal seven layers: Bhur, Bhuvah, Svah, Maha, Jana, Tapa, and Satyaloka. This has been dealt with in detail by Sanatana Goswami in his *Brhad-Bhagavatamrtam*.

Here these seven strata have been summarized in three planes of existence: physical, mental, and intellectual. And these three planes of experience have been summarized in a word, *tat*.

The next word in the *brahma-gayatri* is *savitur*. *Savitur* generally means *surya*, the sun. And the sun means, figuratively, that which shows or illuminates, that by which we can see. The three gross and subtle strata within this world are shown to us by a particular thing, *savitur*. What is that? The soul. Actually, the world is not shown to us by the sun, but by the soul. What really gives us perception and allows us to see gross things? It is not actually the sun that helps us see; we see with the help of the soul. This is found in *Bhagavad-gita* (*yatha prakasyaty ekah krtsnam lokam imam ravih*). The soul expresses this world to us just as the sun does. The sun can show colour to our eyes, but the ear can reveal the sound world, and the hand can reveal the touch world. So, really in the centre

is the soul. It is the soul who gives light to this world, who gives us an understanding of the environment, the world of perception. All perception is possible only because of the soul. Here, the word *savitur*, which generally means “sun”, can only mean soul, for the soul, like the sun shows us everything.

All seven strata of our existence – represented by *bhur*, the physical plane, *bhuvah*, the mental plane, and *svah*, the intellectual plane – have here been reduced to one entity: *tat* – “that”. “That” is shown by the “sun” which in this context indicates the soul. Here, “soul” means “individual soul.” The individual soul is the cause of his world. Not that the mind is in the world, but the world is in the mind. Berkeley has said that the world is in the mind. Here it is being expressed that everything is seen with the help of the sun. If there is no sun, everything is dark – nothing can be seen. So without light, nothing can be seen. And in a higher sense, “light” means the soul. The soul is the subject and the soul’s object is the seven planes of experience within this world.

The next word in the *gayatri-mantra* is *varenyam*. *Varenyam* means *puja*: worshipable, venerable. This indicates that although within this plane – the objective world – the soul is the subject, there is another domain which is to be venerated and worshipped by the soul. That is the Supersoul area.

That worshipable plane of transcendental existence is known as *bhargo*. *Bhargo* means the supersubjective area, the area of the Supersoul. This is mentioned in the first verse of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*: *dhama svena sada nirasta-kuhakaṁ satyaṁ parama-dhamaḥ*. Srila Vyasadeva says that here he is going to deal with another world whose pristine glory is so great that by its own ray, all misconceptions are brushed aside. The subject is the soul, and its object is all these worlds of experience. And the supersubject is the venerable area which is superior to the subject, the soul, that is the supersubjective area.

The word *bhargo* means “more subtle than the soul” and “holding a more important position than the soul.” So this means the Supersoul, the Paramatma. In general, of course, the word *bhargo* ordinarily means light. Just as an x-ray can show us what the ordinary eye cannot see, *bhargo* is *svarupa-sakti* – higher, more powerful light that can reveal the soul. And that energy – *bhargo* – belongs to whom? It belongs to *deva*. What is the meaning of the word *deva*? *Deva* means, “who is beautiful and playful, “ that is, Sri Kṛṣṇa: reality the beautiful.

He is not a non-differentiated substance, but is full of *lila*, pastimes. *Deva* means

pastimes and beauty combined, and this means Krsna.

His domain is *bhargo*, brilliant, and it is *varenyam*, to be venerated by the *jiva* soul. What is the nature of that *svarupa-sakti*? That is the *vaibhava*, the extension of Srimati Radharani. She holds the full service responsibility and the energy to serve Krsna. *Bhargo* is no less than the *vaibhava*, the extended body of Srimati Radharani which contains everything for the service of Krsna. *Bhargo* represents Mahabhava, the predominated moiety, and Deva, Krsna, is Rasaraja, the predominating moiety.

In the *gayatri-mantra*, we are requested, *bhargo devasya dhimahi*:

“Come meditate.” What sort of meditation is possible in that plane of dedication? Not abstract meditation, but service cultivation, *krsnanusilanam*. *Dhimahi* means to participate in the spontaneous flow, the current of devotion in Vrndavana. And what will be the result? (*dhiyo yo nah pracodayat*). The capacity of our cultivation will be increased. As we serve, a greater capacity and willingness to serve will be given to us in remuneration just as interest is added to capital in the bank. (‘*dasa’kari’vetana more deha prema-dhana*). In this way, our dedicating principle will be increased again and again.

Dhimahi means *aradhana*, worship. It cannot but be explained in terms of *aradhana*, *puja*, *seva* – worship, adoration, loving service.

“*Dhi*” is derived from the word *buddhi*, which generally means that which we cultivate with the help of our intelligence. But here, “*dhi*” is a reference to that venerable intelligence which descends into this plane to help us cultivate service. So, *dhimahi* does not mean abstract meditation, but devotional service. This is the underlying meaning of the *gayatri-mantra*.

Gayatri, the song for deliverance, also means *sankirtana*. *Kirtana* is also sung, and it also improves us towards the highest goal. The *sankirtana* of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu also reinstates us in our highest serving position. So *brahma-gayatri* in connection with Mahaprabhu comes to mean *krsna-kirtana*. Then it reaches Vrndavana and the flute- *kirtana*. And when we enter Vrndavana, we shall find that the sweet sound of Krsna’s flute helps to engage all the Lord’s servants in their respective duties. When the flute is sounded, the *gopis* and others are adjusted in their respective duties. At night, the *gopis*, hearing the sound of the flute, will run to the Yamuna thinking, “Oh, Krsna is there.” And

when Yasoda hears the song of Krsna's flute, she thinks, "My son is there. He is coming home soon."

In this way, the sound of the flute engages all the servants of the Lord in their respective positions and inspires them to be mindful of their service.

In my commentary on the *gayatri-mantra*, I have written, *dhira-radha-eva nanyad-iti-tad radha-padam dhimahi*: All other services are represented fully in Radhika. Like branches they are all part of Her. *Madhurya rasa* is the chief or *mukhya rasa*, the combination of all *rasas*. Srimati Radharani is Mahabhava – She represents the entire serving attitude.

The flute-song of Sri Krsna, expressed as the *gayatri-mantra*, is reminding us and engaging us in our service. And what is our service?

Our service must be to surrender ourselves in the service of Srimati Radharani – to accept the suggestion of Radharani. The *gayatri-mantra* will excite us to be mindful about Srimati Radharani's lotus feet, to obey Her orders. She is mainly representing the whole serving area. So to try to engage ourselves in Her service, under Her order – to accept Her direction and to obey Her – that is the service of Sri Radha.

In this way, the meaning of the *gayatri-mantra* has been drawn to *radha-dasyam*, self-determination (*sva-rupena vyavasthitih*).

In the meantime, the partial representations in *vatsalya* and *sakhyā rasa* are also part and parcel of the original mellow of conjugal love, *madhurya rasa*. The *vatsalya rasa* devotee will serve Nanda and Yasoda, the *sakhyā rasa* devotee will serve Sridhama and Sudhama, but ultimately, the whole system in one conception is included in Radharani.

Radha-dasyam, the service of Srimati Radharani is the ultimate meaning to be extracted from the *gayatri-mantra*. That is the supreme end of our life. It cannot but be so. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is the ultimate, or full-fledged, theism to be extracted from the *Vedas*, *Upanisads*, and so many other scriptures. All the revealed truth rises to its acme, to its highest position, in the conception given by *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. And *Srimad-Bhagavatam* teaches us that the highest realization, self-determination, is to be found in the service of Srimati Radharani, that under Her guidance we may serve Sri Krsna. We must directly put all our energy at Her disposal and devote ourselves to Her service. She actually knows

how to serve Krsna. We aspire for a direct connection with Her service.

What is the meaning of the purport of *bhargo*? *Bhargo vai vrsabhanuja-atma-vibhava-eka-aradhana-sri-puram*. *Bhanu* means the sun, or “who shows us by light.” Radharani is the daughter of Vrsa”Bhanu.” So I selected the word “*bhanu*. ” To represent Her personal extended self, I given the word “*vaibhava*.” *Vaibhava* means “what comes out as resourcefulness” or “extended self” *Prabhava* is the central representation, and *vaibhava* is the outer extension. The very gist of *svarupa-sakti* is Srimati Radharani and the whole *svarupa-sakti* is Her extended self. The town of Her beautiful service, that is, the country, abode of Her beautiful service – the whole *svarupa-sakti*.

Just as rays of light extend from the sun, the whole internal potency is an extension of Mahabhava, Sri Radhika. She has developed Herself into such a beautiful area of brilliance, of internal energy, and thereby She serves Her Lord. All these necessary things have sprung from Her. To help Her in serving Her Lord, they all come out. When the entire internal energy is condensed in a concise form, it is Mahabhava, Radharani. And when Radharani wants to serve, She extends Herself in limitless different ways. And with some contribution from Baladeva and Yogamaya, the whole spiritual world, including Vrndavana, Mathura, And Vaikuntha, evolves to assist Srimati Radharani in the service of Sri Krsna.

In this way, I have drawn out *radha-dasyam* as the meaning of the *gayatri-mantra* and have tried to represent it in Sanskrit verse.